

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07

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LAB-04 SIL-01 SAM-01 OMB-01 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 L-03

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AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY MADRID

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TAGS: EEC, GR

SUBJECT: EC-GREECE: COMMISSION VIEWS

REFS: (A) EC BRUSSELS 981, (B) ATHENS 942

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: EC COMMISSION SOURCES BELIEVE THEIR OPINION ON GREEK MEMBERSHIP WAS MORE FAVORABLE TO GREECE THAN IS RECOGNIZED IN ATHENS AND THAT IN TIME THIS WILL BE UNDERSTOOD. THEY EMPHASIZE, HOWEVER, THAT EVEN WITH THE BEST WILL IN THE WORLD, NEGOTIATIONS AND THE LEGAL PREPARATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP WOULD TAKE CLOSER TO FOUR OR FIVE YEARS THAN THE ONE OR TWO THE GREEKS ENVISAGE. DURING THIS PERIOD IT IS IN GREECE'S INTEREST TO RECOGNIZE THE STRUCTURAL PROBLEMS IT FACES AND TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ALL THE ASSISTANCE THE COMMUNITY IS WILLING TO PROVIDE TO TRY TO BEEF UP ITS ECONOMY. END SUMMARY.

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2. SOURCES IN THE EC COMMISSION ARE NOT PARTICULARLY SURPRISED BY THE GENERALLY NEGATIVE INTERPRETATION THAT THEIR

OPINION TO THE COUNCIL ON THE GREEK APPLICATION HAS RECEIVED IN ATHENS. THEY NOTE THAT THE GREEKS HAVE BEEN FED A RATHER HEAVY DIET OF POSITIVE COMMENTARY ABOUT GREEK MEMBERSHIP FROM THE VERY HIGHEST LEVELS OF GOVERNMENTS IN THE MEMBER STATES. AT THESE RARIFIED LEVELS OF DIPLOMACY IT IS USUAL FOR GENERALIZATIONS TO BE MADE WITHOUT CAVEATS OR RESERVATIONS. THE COMMISSION, HOWEVER, CANNOT PERMIT ITSELF SUCH FREEDOM OF ACTION AND FELT OBLIGED TO POINT OUT TO THE COUNCIL SOME OF THE PROBLEMS TO BOTH THE COMMUNITY AND GREECE THAT GREEK MEMBERSHIP WOULD ENTAIL.

3. OUR COMMISSION SOURCES ARE HOPEFUL THAT ONCE THE GREEKS HAVE HAD A CHANCE TO EXAMINE THE COMMISSION'S OPINION MORE CAREFULLY AND THERE HAS BEEN A CHANCE FOR THE COMMISSION TO EXPLAIN WHAT IS BEHIND SOME OF ITS LANGUAGE, THE REACTION IN ATHENS WILL BE MORE REALISTIC. THEY ALSO NOTE THAT THERE IS PROBABLY SOME POSTURING GOING ON IN ATHENS IN AN EFFORT TO SET THE STAGE FOR AS POSITIVE A DECISION AS POSSIBLE FROM THE FOREIGN MINISTERS COUNCIL FEBRUARY 9 AND 10. TO DATE, ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCES, THERE HAS BEEN NO OFFICIAL GREEK REACTION COMMUNICATED TO THE COMMISSION.

4. OUR SOURCES NOTE THAT WHILE THE GREEKS ARE UNHAPPY ABOUT THE COMMISSION PAPER FOR ONE SET OF REASONS, THE TURKS ARE UNHAPPY FOR JUST THE OPPOSITE REASONS. ONE COMMISSION SOURCE TOLD US THAT SOME IN ANKARA ARE FURIOUS BECAUSE THE COMMISSION WENT TOO FAR IN GREECE'S FAVOR. NOT ONLY DID THE COMMISSION SAY YES TO GREECE, BUT IT PROPOSES GREECE HAVE ACCESS TO ALL THE GOODIES OF THE VARIOUS COMMUNITY FINANCIAL RESOURCES EVEN BEFORE THE COMPLETION OF NEGOTIATIONS.

5. OUR COMMISSION SOURCES VIEW THE COMMISSION OPINION AS BEING DEFINITELY FAVORABLE TO GREECE. SOAMES' COMMENTS AT HIS JANUARY 28 PRESS CONFERENCE NOTWITHSTANDING (REFTEL A), THE LANGUAGE IN THE COMMISSION OPINION SUGGESTS THAT NEGOTIATIONS COULD BEGIN WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY. HOWEVER, AS A PRACTICAL MATTER, THIS WOULD INVOLVE THE ELABORATION OF A NEGOTIATING MANDATE FOR THE COMMUNITY AND ACTUAL NEGOTIATIONS EVEN UNDER THE MOST FAVORABLE SCENARIO COULD NOT BEGIN MUCH BEFORE NEXT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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FALL OR WINTER. OUR SOURCES STRESS THAT GREEK MEMBERSHIP IS AN IMMENSELY COMPLICATED ISSUE AND THAT NEGOTIATIONS WILL BE PROTRACTED. THEY NOTE THAT THE SEVEN OR EIGHT YEAR GAP BETWEEN THE FIRST ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH GREAT BRITAIN AND BRITAIN'S EVENTUAL MEMBERSHIP WAS NOT CAUSED EXCLUSIVELY BY THE DEGAULLE VETO. EVEN IF DE GAULLE HAD SAID YES THE NEGOTIATIONS WOULD HAVE UNDOUBTEDLY TAKEN FOUR OR FIVE YEARS. THE SAME APPLIES TO GREECE. DURING THIS PERIOD THE COMMISSION BELIEVES IT IS IN THE INTEREST OF BOTH THE COMMUNITY AND GREECE TO MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ALIGN THE GREEK ECONOMY MORE NEARLY WITH THOSE OF

THE NINE MEMBER STATES.

6. OUR SOURCES EMPHASIZE THAT THE REPORT LEAVES OPEN THE QUESTION OF WHETHER AT THE END OF THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS IT WILL STILL BE NECESSARY FOR AN INTERIM SORT OF ARRANGEMENT PRIOR TO ACTUAL MEMBERSHIP. THAT WOULD DEPEND ON A NUMBER OF FACTORS INCLUDING THE TERMS OF THE NEGOTIATION, THEIR DURATION AND THE SUCCESS THAT THE COMMUNITY AND THE GREEK GOVERNMENT HAS HAD IN MAKING STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN THE GREEK ECONOMY. THE BULK OF THE SUI GENERIS PRE - MEMBERSHIP PERIOD WILL, IN ANY CASE, BE TAKEN UP BY THE NEGOTIATING AND RATIFICATION PERIOD.

7. OUR SOURCES INDICATED THERE WAS A CONSIDERABLE SPLIT IN THE COMMISSION OVER HOW TO HANDLE THE GREEK ISSUE, WITH THE FRENCH AND ITALIAN COMMISSIONERS LARGEMLY HOLDING OUT FOR A MORE FORTHCOMING POSITION. SPINELLI TOLD THE PRESS FOLLOWING THE DECISION THAT IT RISKED BRINGING THE COMMUNITY CLOSER TO A TWO TIER EUROPE. OUR COMMISSION SOURCES WENT TO SOME PAINS TO EMPHASIZE THAT THIS WAS PRECISELY WHAT THE ADHERENTS OF A PRE-MEMBERSHIP PERIOD HAD WISHED TO AVOID. THEY ARGUE THAT IF GREECE WERE PERMITTED TO JOIN WITHOUT ALIGNING ITS ECONOMY WITH THAT OF THE CURRENT MEMBER STATES IT WOULD FIND THAT IT WAS NOT ABLE TO MOVE AHEAD WITH THEM TOWARDS EUROPEAN UNITY. THEREFORE, ACCORDING TO THIS LINE OF REASONING, A PRE-MEMBERSHIP PERIOD DURING WHICH THE GREEK ECONOMY IS BEEFED UP IS REQUIRED PRECISELY TO AVOID A TWO TIER EUROPE.

8. OUR SOURCES SAY IT IS NOT CLEAR HOW THE ISSUE WILL BE HANDLED BY THE FOREIGN MINISTERS ON FEBRUARY 9-10. ONE SCHOOL OF THOUGHT HOLDS THAT SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSIONS SHOULD TAKE PLACE AND GREECE SHOULD BE GIVEN SOME CLARIFICATION, WHILE ANOTHER SCHOOL WOULD
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PREFER SIMPLY TO NOTE THE COMMISSION OPINION AND DISCUSS IT IN DETAIL AT A LATER MEETING, PRESUMABLY AFTER COREPER HAS HAD SOME MORE DISCUSSION OF IT.

9. COMMENT: IN SPITE OF THEIR PRO-GREEK MEMBERSHIP TALK, THERE DOES SEEM TO BE A CHANGE IN THE THINKING AT THE WORKING LEVEL OF THE COMMISSION ON THE TIME-TABLE OF GREEK MEMBERSHIP. THE SAME PEOPLE WHO NOW TALK OF A FOUR TO FIVE YEAR NEGOTIATION USED TO TALK IN TERMS OF A TWO YEAR NEGOTIATION PHASE. THE LAST WORD ON THE GREEK APPLICATION IS CERTAINLY NOT YET IN BUT AS THE GREEKS HAVE BEEN SUGGESTING (REFTEL B) THE KEY LIES IN THE POLITICAL WILL OF THE MEMBER STATES AS EXPRESSED BY THEIR FOREIGN MINISTERS IN THE EC COUNCIL. MORRIS

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